THE BEGINNING...
THE END...
ANEW!

Zedart Hodges

The Beginning . . .
The End . . .
Anew!

Zedart Hodges

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Contents

Cover Page

The Beginning . . . The End . . . Anew!

Copyright Page

The Beginning
A New
THE END

A real life drama, as lived through my eyes,
mind, and will.

I would first like to take the time to acknowledge the person who is the head of my life and that would be my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for he has blessed me with this gift and allowed me to share it with others. My sincere appreciation and gratitude goes to my wife, Anne Njoroge Hodges for her love and unwavering support. To the entire Hunt Family (Jerry, Elina, Menna, and Allison) you have all helped me tremendously. To my Pastor Gerald Sylver and his family, Minister Byron Diggs, and my entire church congregation. Your prayers have sustained me thus far and I know they will continue to propel me forward, Brother Don Webster, Deacon Ervin Hill and the entire youth minsitry, your passion ignites my soul and inspires me each day. Heartfelt thanks to Mr. Brent Leach, Mr. Robert Moore, Tony Bolin and family and also Joseph R. Kaualiauskas Jr. may God continue to bless each of you and your families.

This book was put together to let people know that you can live a life without, and after, drugs; and that we need the one that put this vessel together if we are to sail through this life of uncertainty.

My name is Zedart Hodges, Jr. I was born in 1949 in a little town outside of a little town called Nahunta in Wayne County; about fifty or so miles southeast of Raleigh, N.C. It really was a sharecropper's town with one store that everybody got food and grain from on credit. I barely remember my father. I was very small when he passed, and all I remember is a lot of people coming over to the house and ma-ma crying all the time. The next thing I remember is moving to town. The name of this town was called Goldsboro. It was hard for country folk moving to a town where we didn't know anybody. After a while, my sister, she was a lot older than me, she got this job at this cleaner which was good. But then something happened and she didn't work there anymore so we began to meet people. Some good. Some just wanted what they could get out of you which weren't much because we didn't know a whole lot. My mom started to sell whiskey. White whiskey made in the woods. Then we started to learn people. We moved a couple of times. Years passed. We were still selling whiskey. My mom started drinking but still maintaining as head of the house. Time went on. I dropped out of school but I didn't drop out until high school. Then I went to this job corps. First, in this place called Iron Wood, Michigan. Cold as cold can be. I met people from everywhere. Gang members, wannabe gang members. Now, during this time I thought that I didn't need anybody. So, o.k. I didn't like Michigan; too cold. I left, came home, stayed. More time went by and I wanted to make something happen. Got in trouble with the po-po, and during that time job corps was the in thing. If they didn't want to send you to prison, they sent you to job corps. So I signed up again. This time I went to Pleasanton, California. Man, I thought that was cool again. People from everywhere. So I get out there and that's where I got introduced to Mary Jane. It was everywhere. Then one weekend me and some more guys went to the city by the bay, and that's where I got introduced to hippies. Free love and drugs. I am not talking about Mary Jane. I am talking about acid, window pane, and stuff like that. I went to jail; stayed in jail for about two weeks or more. I went to court. The judge told me to be on the next thing smokin' back to Carolina if I didn't want to go to prison. So I went back to camp and they took me to the bus station, and I was on my way back home.

So now I get back in Goldsboro. My mom is a full pledge alkie. My sister was now selling whiskey; trying to put my mom in the insane asylum. So we got to arguing. She put me out ofthe1house. So this guy that I used to go to school with, he had just gotten home from Vietnam. So we hooked up and I asked him, "Hey, let's go get high." So he said, "O.k. but I don't drink or smoke." So now I am thinking

how he ‘gone get high without drinking. So he pulled out this needle and stuff and looked at me, and I didn’t want to back down because I thought I was tough. But that little bit of stuff beat my ass. But it was a good high. The next day no bad breath or nothing like that. So after a few times I noticed when I didn’t have it my appetite was gone. But I didn’t want anything to eat, and when I got it I didn’t want to eat until I got a fix. Back during those days your high lasted for a little while. But you better be near some more.

I was called “Red” because I was light skinned until the drugs started takin’ its toll. Then it was dirty red because drugs will make your skin lose its naturally clean look. That’s even if you wash regularly. If not, your skin will look dull. My sister gave me the nickname “Pete.” That one stuck. That one is on file with the police. Then there was “1/2 Bread.” I remember one time when I was high this guy asked me, “What do you want to be called? You got so many nicknames.” And I said, “As long as you don’t call me a bunch of dirty names, we’ll be all right.” So he asked me my given name and I told him, and he said: “I’ll stick with Pete.”

But I remember this one time. I was home after some years of shooting dope. I was home and feeling so bad. This dealer came to my house and I asked him if he was straight, and he said, “Yes.” So I said, “I want a bag. So he sold me a bag, and I was in a hurry to shoot up. So I went into my room, fixed it up, but I forgot to lock the door, and this friend of the family opened the door for whatever reason; I don’t know. And he saw me shooting up, and from that day on he called me “Scatter Brain.” Now that one was painful. Not because he was a friend of the family but because I respected him and looked up to him. Remember, there was no father figure in my life, and he was cool as far as cool goes. And from that day on until he died my name was “Scatter Brain.” And every time he saw me before he passed away that was my name. That’s what he called me growing up. I first started shooting dope with a dropper. Just put a nipple around the barrel with a needle and it’s on. A shoot house has its ups and its downs. The ups are that you get to see a lot of women get loose, and being a teenager sometimes you get to help them get loose. Some people were good as far as good goes in a shoot house. And then there were some bad, and then there were some that you didn’t care if you ever saw again. These are the ones that always want something for nothing. Then there are those that put the “k” in cool. And you see them get played like a West Virginia banjo back in the day. I wasn’t interested in nothing but getting high. And trying to fool somebody before I got fooled myself. Stealing whatever I could sell to get money. In and out of jail during my late twenties, thirties, forties, and early fifties. And

each time got longer and longer. And each time I got more and more disappointed with myself. Selling drugs in prison. Loan sharking anything to make a buck. And then I ran up on this three strikes law and realized that no matter what, the third strike was the third time. You could get a long time. That's when I made up my mind to try and do the right thing for me. I was getting older and my future was starting to look real bad. That's when you are supposed to start seeing that there's more to life than jail, drugs, and being mad at yourself. And you try to stop the self-destructive way of thinking and start seeing that there's life beyond that drug, those pills that needle, that glue, or whatever your drug of choice is. And you begin to get high on life and living. And you start seeing that, or begin to see, that it's all good when you ask for help to come out of that hood mentality.

I wasn't real bad back in the day, but then I wasn't real good either. Always looking for a chance to get over on whoever or whatever. I grew up in one of those little towns where on the weekends white kids would line up on each side of the main street drinking beer or whatever; even on our end of town. And the po-po would patrol, making sure that nothing would happen to them. There was a movie theatre where blacks had to sit up top and whites would sit downstairs. But after throwing cups of pee and rocks and whatever, it was made a "whites only" movie theatre. Then sometimes we would be walking from the store or pool in the summer. You would have your shirt off and here come some white kids in a car with a broken car arrow and hit someone as hard as they could. The car would be going around ten to fifteen miles per hour. Now, I am not prejudice. I was just preconditioned, you know what I mean. There were two fights that I had to fight. One was from my brothers and sisters, my people; because I was fair skinned I had to prove that I was black enough. So I was in the middle. Disliked by whites and disregarded by some blacks.

I remember with us, my crew, that there used to be seasonal stealing. For a while, times were tight. Nobody had a job. Oh, every now and then someone would work maybe one or two days, but nobody had a steady job and we wanted to work. But anyways, there were gangs stealing. One group would steal this, another would steal something else. I remember it being like that but there was always an opening to steal something, and we didn't let a chance get by us; me and my crew. I say my crew because a lot of times we would be with different people. If you were good at this or that, whatever, we focused on that at any given time. But everybody stole something. I remember one time this guy told me, "Anything will sell Pete. Nothing won't." And from that day on there was no limit. Now, everybody

wanted something for less than what it sold for. I remember in times past there was this store outside this little town that had cigarettes in this case. And this case was in the middle of this store so that no matter which end of the cashier a person was on they could see what was going on. This case had just enough room so you could stick your arm or hand and get what you wanted. Anyway, there was an alarm if you reached in and they could see, and we would get on both sides and make this alarm sing a tune, I guess you say, man why didn't they call the police? Sometimes they did but by the time they got there we would be long gone. We had about three or four stores like that. Can you imagine three or four hard core junkies all stealing your stuff? Looking crazy because drugs will make you look like a madman when you need a fix.

Hey check this one out. When school was about to open after summer we would go and get orders from people. Remember, I told you everybody wanted something for less than what it cost; especially if they didn't have to go shopping for it. I remember one time we furnished all the plumbing parts to this guys house, like handles and stuff like that. Man, we were crazy. We used to steal riding lawnmowers. When we did that we really didn't need to go out for about three or four days. We used to go and steal cases of cigarettes. There were times when back in the day on the block these white men would come through the block and pull a young girl off. She wouldn't let him take her far, and we knew where she was taking him. They would get there, he would get ready, we were watching, he would drop his pants, we would rob him; give the girl a few bucks so it wouldn't look bad. We would go to these stores, steal their money bags, but our thang was clothes. Everybody wanted to look good. All this time I was without structure in my life. And now it was the order of the day. Bless you friend.

As time goes on and I am no longer under the captivating spirit of drugs, I begin to realize that bad spirits are everywhere at all times. Now, I am not saying that I am perfect. I am just saying life and love have afforded me something that very few people can boast about, and how it came about is nothing more that will not be given to anyone that wants to be free. Free from the knowledge of who you are. We weren't born contrary to God's word. We were born to perform his word and will. There's so much that I've missed in time past because of unbelief in myself and God. Now, I know that to some people God is far from being thought about, but I am here to tell you that you can't deny this fact all day. But until you come to the knowledge of who he is and what he can do in your life through his son, there will be no peace. No peace of who you are and no idea of

what life is all about without drugs, without stealing, without an understanding of what this life is all about; without something that will alter your train of thought; to wave anything that will enhance your life instead of walking the road of self destruction. Time is short, but life can be yours for the asking only if you submit. Just say I give up. I am tired of waking up every day, or morning, and having to wonder where the next hit will come from, and if by chance you get that hit will you O.D., or what.

You know a few years ago I was like many of you; didn't know anything about nothing. But one evening as I was laying in jail on that piece of steel, this young man that I went to school with came into the jail and told me, "Man, I thought that you were dead." But I said, "No." "This life I am living now is hard", and he looked at my arms and said, "I understand." He could understand because he used to shoot drugs with me, and I said, "Come on man. Tell me how I can leave this behind." And be said, "We will never forget it, but we can leave it behind or kick it to the curb, I know a friend that is more than a friend. All you have to do is believe that he is. Just get in a lone place where there will only be you and him, and begin to call his name, Jesus. And say, Lord I believe that you are real and I want you, if you hear me, to help me leave this madness of drugs and doing things that are contrary to your will. To help me to live a life that's free from drugs, stealing, lying, cheating, selfishness, and thinking that it's all about me. Lord, if you are real, help me in Jesus name. And begin to ask him for forgiveness. Tell him all that you ever did; good or bad. And say, Lord please forgive me. And then just start thanking him, and ask him to help you to study his word. You can't praise him openly until you've met with him secretly."

Well, now you begin to start trying to do the right things, and you already know the right things. You just have to remind yourself. Now, this is not an easy road. As soon as you start wanting to do right, everything will go wrong. Now, in my case when I decided to do right, dealers came out of the wood works just trying to give drugs and to help me do the wrong thang. Then you ask them to stay away. I am trying to do the right things now. But how many know that this is not a journey that is to be taken lightly or by yourself? You need to find someone to help you run this race. Jesus will give you strength. You just need to ask him when you feel weak. Now, people will come at you all the time. Situations will come about more often than not. You just have to get, or be determined to do, right by yourself, and ask for help from the right people. The one's that want to see you do the right thing because they love you and know that there is a fight that you must fight, and know that you need help and will be willing to help;

no questions asked. The Lord will send people your way because only he has your best interest at heart. We just need to keep believing in him and trusting him to do his will in our lives. And no matter what happens, just keep trusting in him and his word, and you will begin to see. Brothers and sisters you got to want this way of life more than anything you ever did. Just keep asking for strength to do the right thing and he will help you. Believe me, I know. After years of drug abuse, going to jail, he still saved me. I am not saying that it will be easy but it seems like you can fight better when you know that someone is with you that got your back no matter what. As long is you try or do the right things to help yourself, I know that you are going to make it because I am living proof that Jesus is real. I know because when I was lying in jail coming down off drugs, asking to see the nurse, wanting something for pain, calling on everybody spiritually, and no one to listen. Not even the jailers. Now, that will help you put things in their right place quick. Anyway, when I began to call on the name of Jesus and let him know that I was sick and tired of being sick, and that I knew that there was something better, I began to start thinking about the times I went to jail for nothing. But sometimes I went for stealing, wanting to get high; and we just started talking about things that happened in time past that didn't even make sense, but because of drugs and trying to get high I thought the things I was doing made all the sense in the world to me. And as time went on, I started to see how foolish and meaningless my life was. Remember, this is after years of drug abuse. Now, this was when I had tried everything and everybody. I was at my wit's end, as some people would say, but knew that there was something better. You start thinking about the times that you avoided death, and you start wondering who or what happened that you didn't O.D., or didn't get a hot shot from somebody that didn't want to share their drugs; and sometimes you would get a water shot. I used to run with people that were just that greedy. So you know that somebody other than you was looking out for you, and so you start looking back on your life and realize that those adversaries of darkness only wanted to take you out of the picture.

I am somewhat amazed that there are, or should I say, that most people have the character or characteristics of someone that still thinks that the world owes them something. But listen to me. We must change our way of thinking, and the only way one can bring about this change is that one start first with his or herself. You can't change until you start thinking change. Then, and only then, will your life begin to take on new meaning. But we must want this change very much. Now, I am not saying that things will happen for you right away. You know with any new relationship there will be times when

doubt will enter in, but we must know that the change we make for ourselves is for our good, and that we want it. Like a new baby, we must depend on our big brothers and sisters to help us overcome the foolish things that we used to do, and say the Bible says that we must begin with the milk of the word because when the change begins we are so gullible that we will go for anything; and that shouldn't be the case. That's why we must ask for understanding when we read or hear God's word. It's like when we first go to a new place. Everybody knows that you're new. The new kid on the block. That's why we must start going to church and attending bible study so we can not only hear the word, but be taught it also. And as you become familiar with his word you will begin to be familiar with his ways, and as a result your life will begin to change for the better. Believe me, it will. Also, in doing this process we must try to avoid wrong people and places, and start hanging with people of like mind or the same interests as us. It's not a bad thang, trust me. It's a good life. A clean life. A meaningful life. A Christ like life. And it's all good, trust me.

You know one of the most misunderstood scriptures in the Bible is when Jesus was talking to Nick. Now, when he asked that, or told him what he must do in order to become a child of the most high God, you can see that it threw him for a loop. Just as today, people are still perplexed by this very notion of being reborn, and they're not looking at the incident being spiritual. I Mostly, I guess because like Nick there must be a spiritual quickening in order to understand what God has for those that believe in his Son, Jesus. I was once there. I knew of God but I didn't have a relationship with his Son; and as a result I was lost wandering about with a big gorilla on my back. We are blessed to know that there is someone who loves us no matter. We must realize who's in control. Hey, it ain't who or what you think. Let's keep this thing real. It's time for human wisdom to be kicked to the curb and grasp the real deal. No one on earth can give you the understanding about life except the life giver. It's time for kingdom rule. Listen, when you were in control your life was a mess. You don't need to admit it. I know young people, I've been where you are. You got to get to where I am, and with all that's going on, only in the word of God can any satisfying light shine on the mysterious and baffling subject of life.

I went to church today, and this day, as every time that I do, which is not all the time as it should be, I really got into this service because the subject was a heart matter; that at all times in our lives we must be willing to do, be it wrong or right. We must trust, and hopefully we have sense enough to trust the right things for our lives. But now we have help and we must make the decision to put all of our trust in God who's in control of all this. That's how and why I made it. I knew that

I had to put my trust in somebody other than myself. I was out there shooting drugs, not because I wanted to but because I had to. You know people say that the ones that love you would say, “Why don’t you just stop?” But I am here to tell you that you can’t just stop. We must realize that we are not talking about something that you can put down like a newspaper or a pen, and forget about it. We are talking about something that’s in your spirit. Something that’s become part of your makeup. Something that you need to feel normal, so you think. What I am trying to say is that we need the spirit of all spirits to help us get rid of this thing, and even then it won’t be easy because remember, we’re used to doing and it’s become part of us. You can’t just stop. We must put our trust in God. We need the programmer instead of a program. A program teaches you to put your trust in a man. The programmer teaches you to put your trust in the man, Jesus. Now, I know that a lot of people don’t want to do, or have anything to do with Christianity or Jesus, but I am sorry. I was once there myself until my eyes were opened. Opened by the concern of a friend; someone that knew that there was something better. Better than waking up in the morning sick and knowing that there’s nothing that will help you but a shot of drugs. You don’t want anything but the hit of a mind numbing, stomach turning, hit of a drug that has turned your world upside down. We weren’t born to do drugs, but after you’ve done them for so long you begin to think so. But then you start thinking about all the things you’ve lost. You begin to feel sorry for yourself, and when that happens you want more. More of the drug that suppresses your need for food, sex, love, and companionship; all the things we need to feel alive. The entire nature of man and woman mentally, morally, spiritually, and physically is sadly affected by drugs.

I remember reading this story in the Bible. It was about this lady that didn’t have anything after her husband died. This was a very touching story. But there’s meaning to this story, especially about this young man, Boaz. Now, he was pretty well off but he knew his land, and the people working that land; he was used to seeing people on his land that he knew for some time. But when someone or something seems to be out of place, we ask questions; and this is what Boaz did because he was seeing the same people all the time. But when someone different comes around we tend to get uneasy very quickly because we know that that person, or thing, wasn’t there in the beginning. Now, from time to time we get in our heads that some things were just meant to be, but I am here to let you know that’s not so. Sometimes we need to step back and ask ourselves, “Is this the way that this is supposed to be?” And if it upsets you, or makes you unfortunate, then the answer is no. Then we must figure out what’s

really going on. But that's not our job. When we turn our lives over to God it's on him to help us to do the right thang. Only when we try to do this for ourselves do we start doing crazy things and expecting everything to come out right. But we must understand that there are some things in this world that only the spirit can tackle. And that's why I think, or I know, that we really don't have a clue about what is and what ain't suppose to be right. We just go with the flow. A lot of times the flow be taking us too fast to see what's really going on, and I was there at one time. Didn't know nothing in and out of prison, but one day I got tired. It was on the 3rd of July 1995. I was figuring out what I was going to do for the 4th. I didn't know that I was going to spend it in jail. Couldn't call. No bail bond man couldn't do nothing because everybody was out of town or something. So here I am stuck like chuck in jail for at least a week before I could even start to call anyone to get me out, and as time went on I started to be sick. Stomach hurting, head hurting, and no one to even give me an aspirin. So I stayed in jail for a while sick. That's when I began to, as the old people would say, take stock of my life. And I looked, and I wasn't getting any younger, so I started thinking about what if I was so sick at times that I didn't know what was going on. Everything running. So here I am now. Remember, I had been shooting drugs for most of my life. I am in my late 40's. Nothing to show for my life but tracks on my arms and neck; sick and no one to help. Now, that's a bad feeling when there's no one there and you start to think am I gonna die like this. But the pain from the drugs won't even let you dwell on that but for a minute, and the pains start. Then you start to wonder if this is it, or will I last until the next day or what. But the pain gets so bad sometimes; it's all you can do to go to sleep. Then you really see what you need to do with the rest of your life. Survey the land. All too often when we make up our minds to change our lives, after some time when things begin to look right for us, we seem to think that because we were made right with God through Jesus spiritually, we can forget that at one time in our lives we were partners with darkness; doing all we could to kill ourselves, and others, or anyone that loves us. When we do time, they do time. When we are out in the streets doing bad, we make them look bad. We must know that we live our lives for the ones we love as well as ourselves. Now, every now and then we think that we're not hurting anybody but us, but as time goes, and if we have any morals about ourselves, we will begin to accept the truth. But then we don't really want to face reality because we've been living a lie for so long that it has become part of our reality; that false sense of self-control that tells us that we don't need nobody or nothing. Now, that's crazy. Look, I remember when I was out there running drugs with an overcoat on and everything. Hey, you may say ain't

nothing wrong with that. But when it's 90 degrees out with a pair of long johns on too? Now tell me that ain't crazy. Now, when we come to our senses and make up our minds to do the right thang, arid the people we used to run with start wanting to change their minds but can't, that's when we know that we can't do this by ourselves. I need some help. Now, drugs are a spirit, and we need the spirit of all spirits to help us with this. Some may think I don't need nobody. Listen, don't lie to yourself. Get your help from God. I am not saying that N.A. and A.A. aren't good programs; they are. But I believe that if they don't lead you to Jesus, then something is missing. Oh, I knew that you were going to say that they are good programs but they're not the program, and we need the program that's been set forth by Jesus Christ, not Bill or Bob. I think that's when we base our lives on a program instead of someone that made it possible for all programs. Well, you tell me. Now, take your faith away from man and put it in Jesus' hand. Good Lord, now that's a good thing. Now, the reason I say this is because I've lived through a life of drugs and being in and out of prison. Hey, people say that we learn by example, or should I say that some people can learn by example. Some people can be looking right at something and still there is disbelief. Those are the ones that have some serious issues. Even now there are times when that thought of me, myself, and I is in effect. But I must constantly think about who I am and what he's done in my life, and say help me Lord to be responsible. For your actions are a hell of a thing; especially when you've been doing contrary to what must be right. I know that a lot of people believe that nothing and nobody has any right to speak into their lives, or say anything about what they do or say. Now, that attitude is unacceptable. There must be someone, or you must allow someone, to speak positive things in your life. This person must be someone who has their head on straight, though you can't have someone speaks to you that's doing mo drugs than you. It will just be the blind leading the blind. Both of you will fall in the ditch. I am doing all I can to reach you where you are. You feel me? I know that you do. So come on and let's start doing the right thang, O.K? Believe it or not, it ain't that hard. We just need to try a little harder. For some, that's a hard thang because drugs tear down your morals of right and wrong; but now we have help. And all we need to do is call on his name and mean what we say. But sometimes that's so hard when we've lived life on our own terms for so long. But we must realize that we have given up control of our lives and body without a doubt. Believe in Jesus Christ. He the man now. So let's keep it real this time, alright?

I was there once. When you're young you think that nothing or nobody has a right to speak anything to you about anything that helps

you in any way. Life has afforded some people around us to speak into our lives, but we are so bent on self-destruction that nobody can say anything to us or about us. We need loved ones that will say what we are, or are not, doing. We need fellowship with each other. Believe that a lot of what's wrong with us is that we always hate on each other and other loved ones in our lives. Life's supposed to teach us about responsibilities that we must think about more than ourselves. When we start to be in control of what we think, we begin to see how foolish we were about things we thought we didn't have any control over. When our minds start clearing, we start looking within ourselves and realizing that who we are is far better than who or what we were, and we start to take charge of our actions; only then, when we start thinking with a clear mind; a mind not clouded by selfishness and consumed with bitter thoughts when over the years our thoughts and actions were hindered by drugs, arid our physical, mental, and spiritual self was out of balance. Our whole existence, or so we think is focused around that dealer or what he's dealing, and our flesh says more and we give it more because we don't want to feel bad. But everything is out of balance. But from time to time that merry go round slows down and a small voice says, "Do you want to get off?" And if you haven't hit the bottom and you think that the thrill is better, you keep riding. Then you start to realize that life is passing you by and you want to get off, but then you hear that someone across town OD'ed. And it's off to the races again; you keep riding each time. You make up your mind to get off. Here comes somebody or something with more, and you want it so the ride gets faster, and it takes more of an effort to say I want to get off, so you keep on keeping on. Well, you know that a lot of times when you are almost straight you have a need to look at some other people that you used to hang with, and say man you need to get it right. But people that still out there can look at you and tell if you are for real or if you mean business. So you need to work on yourself first.

I remember when I would go home. I would always see this young man that would always come around. When you start trying to do the right thing everybody wants to see you and see if you are real or just faking the game. Anyway, this boy would always come around and we would start talking about things; getting high and everything. And he would always say that nobody would give him a chance. So the Lord laid on my heart to see if this young man was real and let him see that it ain't what you got, it's who you know. So I was blessed to give this young man a car' I signed the title over to him and everything. He was thankful for the present, but he needed the gift, and you can only get that if you submit to God's will and his way, and that's real. How many of you know that the more you try to do right the more sin

draws you back; back to doing whatever you are trying to stop doing? So that's why we need help. Not help from man because man is only a bandage that we put on a sore of everlasting pain, and we need someone to erase the pain. Now that's real.

I'm writing this letter to let you know the danger of looking away; away from family, real friends, and most of all a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. When I was younger, I didn't really understand the importance of family. I don't really remember my father. All I knew was mom. She was mother and father to us. Can't put the blame on mom. She did the best she could. The family life and love began to be halfhearted, so I thought when my mom started drinking and stuff. Hey, don't get it twisted. She loved us. But when you are young, somebody's best ain't good enough. Maybe she wasn't there all the time, but she loved us with real love.

Sometimes we look for things to happen just because and don't really look at the way it really was, and sooner or later we start looking for something else to fill the void not knowing that that void will be there until we find the one that created the void from the beginning. We start running away from the very thing that can hold us together. We start staying out late, talking back to our parents, and sooner or later we start telling them how they should treat us like we're equal with them and we know what's best for us, and if you tell them long enough they start believing it too. That bad people start giving up on you when they see the way you treat your parents, and in a little while you start looking away, and when you start looking away people that care anything about you start looking away. Not because they don't love you but because they can't seem to talk any sense into you. And in a while, look out! Here comes the street, and there's no love in the streets from nobody. The streets have begun to let you see that your life wasn't right and so you lose any sense of reason with yourself, and anyone else. You start looking away from things that matter in your life. You start thinking that it's all about you and not the people around you, mainly family. Looking to things that will only give you that self-gratification; false pride. And when that happens look out! Here come the streets, full force. And after a while you begin to lose focus on things that really matter; family. And your family will help you not knowing that the only thing that you need is a big dose of reality and help from somebody that don't need help. When everything that you think you are has been reduced to less than nothing when you get caught looking away.

In times past I was very uneasy with myself and the things that I wanted, or that I thought I wanted] I started off smoking, but soon

after moved on to acid. This weight loss drug, it was called B-52's. Then, there was the needle; cocaine and heroin. Together, it was called speed-ball and that was the one for the next 20 years or so. I lived to put a spike in my arm. I used to shoot dote sometimes 2 or 3 times a day. There was a crew of us going around stealing to pay for our habit, No store no matter where or what city was off limits. Then here comes crack. My friends and I did not only shot heroin but we shot crack and heroin together. Smoking it didn't get us where we wanted to be. It's amazing the things we come up with when we're sick and need a hit or fix or whatever you want to call it. My family sold whiskey so I didn't really have to steal a lot or Jo out to steal every day. Now, when I didn't have cocaine for my speed ball, I would get me some crack and get it back to liquid form, and mix it with my heroine, and that was my speed ball. And I would do these sometimes 2 or 3 times a day. I was in and out of jail a lot. Remember I did this for some 20 or 25 years, so it started during the 60's. I was in and out of jail spending time. I would get clean, come out, and do the same thing. I did this for some time, so much that some of the po-po's knew me by name, and what I would and would not do. But I got tired this last time I went to jail. I knew that there was something better but I was afraid to admit it to myself because I had put a needle in my arm for so long and had heard so much about Christianity. How it wasn't this or wasn't that. And I didn't know for myself so I was skurd. But how many of you know that you must get this good news for yourself? I am tired of shooting dope, getting older and tired of going to jail. So I prayed from my heart to something or somebody, and I said Lord if you are God you won't let me hurt like this. So I am in jail sick, in pain, and asking for something to ease the pain, or help me to feel better; couldn't eat. Running from both ends and no help from authorities. I was in a bad place, but how many of you know that when you're down all you can do is look up if you want to get up? So I talked with the Lord. Remember, I didn't know him, but just the things I'd heard. So I just stayed in my cell talking to God, and all I know is that it was working, and I was glad. So now I am in jail awaiting trial, facing the bitch along with other charges. And all that added up to about or at least 20 years. So I told my court appointed lawyer I wanted them in the box. So all this time I am getting closer to the Lord and feeling comfort in the depth of my discomfort. I made a life changing move. I stood on the word of God until I thought the time matched my crimes. When you're in Christ any move you make for you, as long as it's according to the word of God, doesn't make you feel bad; about anything you do or say. Now that's real. So we settled on about 40-57 months. Now, remember I am guilty, but not 20 years of guilt. But during this time in jail the Lord gave me a dream about

what church he wanted me to attend. Remember, we must turn everything over to him when we accept him as our Lord and Savior, and he'll handle it with you. So the dream was of a blue cross and I saw a white robe. I couldn't see a face. So as time went on I was studying God's word; doing the right thing. So I made Honor Grade. I wanted to go to this place called Rocky Mount but that place was closing, so I came to Raleigh to Wake Correction, got a job working at a woman's prison. Ha, I worked over there for 2 years and didn't get a write-up. Now that's amazing. So o.k. I am at Wake going to Yoke-Fellow, and one night I went there and met this young man and he said, or told me, that he would take me to church the following week. I said o.k. Weekend came. I got dressed and waited. Time went and came. I was down-hearted, but when you are in Christ the Holy Spirit will help you cope, and he told me to put my trust in no man. So I got on my bunk, started reading. Time to go to work. Next week he came and told me what had happened, so I said o.k. The next Sunday he came and took me to church, and time I walked in I saw that blue cross, and I said to myself Lord what are you trying to tell me? The next time I went to church the preacher came out there and he had on a white robe, and I said Lord I know this is where you want me to be. And I joined that church. And the name of that church is Freedom Temple. The next week I told a few brothers at York-Fellow what happened and I am still at that church today.

Even though I've been here on this earth for a little while, I've seen so much hatred and mistrust. Even from people that are supposed to love you like family. As a matter of fact, it mostly came from family. Especially if you're in the drug game. But even after I've stopped using and I can see a little clearer, I can still see game. When we allow foolishness in our lives, we're fair game for any and everyone that has wrong on their mind. But you really feel sorry for all those—that think they can get over. Now, when you have been there and know what time it is, you can lee game and understand it somewhat. But realize that that's not the way. But then if you're the one being played, and even if you're not, we the same. See how crazy people have become; but to some degree you can say I understand. I understand how drugs can upset your mind and alter your train of thought to where anything that you do, you can justify your actions; no matter what. And you do this for so long you even fool you. That's when you're on a downward spiral. But you can't see it because you've fooled yourself into believing that you are right by you. Dreams are a good thing, but when you live a nightmare and refuse to wake up to what's going on in your life, it's only a matter of time. But it's all good if you want to do good. Remember, if you keep doing what you're doing, you'll keep getting what you got. It's time to wake up! But just anybody can't

wake up. You must want to be awoken to the right thing, not another nightmare.

I know that you don't want to hear people that love God talk about the love of Jesus and what he did, or what happened when he died on the cross. But it won't hurt you to listen; if you just take time and think about something other than a hit of drugs, or making money, or trying to beat somebody out of something. Take 5 minutes out of your precious time and help yourself see who you are. There are a lot of people that think that this life is it. But there's more to God's plan than you trying to be hard. Hey, you ain't hard. You may have bad breath but you ain't hard. And you ain't a killer. As a matter of fact, you are a punk panty wearing somebody. Don't anybody owe you anything. But you and we short changed ourselves when we started thinking that nobody loves us. There are a lot of people that think just like you. We need to start looking at the big picture and realize who the artist is. You know I've ran into a lot of people that would say when I stop doing this or that I'll start doing the right thang. But hey, it ain't up to you. We must remember that this is just a pit stop in the journey of forever, and it depends on what you put in your tank; how far you will go through this life of uncertainty. There are pit stops and curbs that don't stop curving until you stop and ask for directions, and get off at the right exit. You know, there's a saying that says we are our own worst enemy, and that's true. I think it's because we don't want nobody or nothing in our way when we start moving in a direction that we think we should go. But there's only right and wrong. Only good and evil. And sometimes we have a hard time. We don't need someone to show us wrong and evil, but we need to hold somebody's hand to show or help us with right and good. The attributes of right and good are prohibited in our lives, especially when we think we have come into our own way, and we think that life has short changed us. But I am here to tell you that everyone is given the same chance in the beginning.

I remember when I first got saved. I went to church often, listened intently to the minister) and from time to time felt pretty good about what I had done in my life. But I was still dipping and slipping and knew that I was alright, or so I thought. Family and friends started I back speaking to me. I just knew that I was something, but how many of you know that the Bible says when you think you are something you are nothing? My whole being is thinking that I am o.k. But there was something missing. But I didn't know any better because I didn't know that I had to be taught about willing myself to do and be a better person. So when I went to church, no matter what the preacher was preaching about, it seemed as if he was talking to me, always

looking at me, but that wasn't the case at all. I had been living in sin for so long that I was doing what I thought I wanted to do. So it wasn't that the preacher was talking to me. I was whipped doing wrong. For so long I had trained myself to believe that people were talking about me, even when they didn't even know me or what I'd done in the past. "Ya" man. I was whipped by my, or the imaginary walls that I had built around myself. But do you know that we need to allow those walls to crumble before we can really start to put or lives back together? We must first understand that we are not in control of nothing, and the things that we do, or did, don't make us any bad? It just makes us worse. I know that you don't want to hear what it really is about but that's the way it is. I am just being real. I used to be an addict just like you and that's another thing you couldn't tell me that I was. A junkie. That word junkie sounds so nasty. I just thought that I was an occasional drug user. But then the last two letters were all it was. I had thrown the rest of the letters away. Your mind will make you think that everybody is against you, and what you think about you. That's when you know that you are whooped badly. That's when we need someone that can help us change our minds about things and people. You know your mind is so wonderful at times, and then sometimes it's your worst battle ground. Let's not get it twisted. Sometimes it's good to think about good things; bad things. Things that will help us move from one level of living to another. But from time to time if you ain't sharp, you get stuck on the things that harm you and make you do crazy things. This spirit called drugs. I was a young lad pouring drinks in my mom's shot house. 1 for them and 1 for me. It didn't take me I long to move from drinks to drugs, Mary Jane, then boy, then girl, then boy and girl, then boy and crack. When we couldn't find cocaine we would buy crack and break it down and put boy and crack in our veins. We were whooped bad.

I was or went to my home town to speak at the church that I was baptized in some time back, and they had a program, and there were a few speakers there as well as myself. And this program was about this cake. It was called a spiritual cake and the ingredients had to mean something spiritual. Anyway, my topic was love and I spoke about how love kept me from being lost when I was out there on drugs. And it was love that kept me from a lot of things. How it kept me from this big disease with the little name, and it's true love kept me from a life of hurt and pain. But my mind was closed to understanding. But after the Lord saved me, and as I began to study his word, I started to realize how powerful love is, and can be. And I was telling some friends about this program and what the Lord blessed me to speak about, and one friend said that I would run into problems from time to time because some people's minds are closed to this understanding,

and will be in doubt. Now, we can understand the love for family, for husband or wife, but we need to understand the love that the Lord has for us. This was the love that I was talking about. But then if we don't love ourselves and our neighbor, we won't be able to understand the real meaning of love. Now, it's the lack of love that will keep us from a lot of things that God has for us, along with healing and anything else. But we must first love ourselves, and then the love for God and others will start to manifest in our lives. But until we begin to love ourselves, we won't have the capability to love God and others. In order for God's power to be manifested in us, we must first love ourselves. God is the only one that could have brought this about in my life. I am talking about this healing and deliverance from whatever. We must understand that love for Christ can only bring about change in our lives. Now, our understanding has been darkened by evil desires but if we begin to think about good things, say good things, do good things, the eyes of our understanding will begin to open; and we will start looking to the hills from which comes our health and strength, and mix this with love. Ain't no telling what you can do. But we must first start with the love for self. God can only bring about change in our lives through love and the understanding that Jesus was his son in the flesh. Now listen, everybody is doing wrong, but this is the real deal. I want you to respect me for being me and my son as Lord; and if these things don't come about in your life, you're gone' keep getting what you got. Give my son his props. Realize what he did for you. I want you to get to know him like you know that bottle, or that bag, or them pills. Get up in the morning and call on him instead of the man with the pipe dreams. You need to stop chasing ghosts. Been there, done that.

How misinformed can we be when we allow someone or something to have control and dictate when we think, the way we move our emotions, and every aspect of our being. I remember sometime ago I ran into this friend of mine that was a high school football star, and we got to talking about old times. Both of us were high and I thought that by him being a star in high school that he was on his way out of the ghetto. Anyway, we were talking and I asked him what happened. He had a full scholarship and everything. So anyway, I asked what happened. He said he went to this party one night drinking and all of a sudden the room started spinning. He told me that he went on a trip and he ain't got back yet. The eyes of his understanding were darkened to the ways and things that people will do to you when they see you moving ahead. We are supposed to put our trust in the Lord. Now, I know that it's not popular to trust in something that we can't see, but that something that we can't see has our best interest at heart. I don't understand why a lot of things happen, but I know who makes

them happen. We must trust in the one that gives us hope and pray that the eyes of our understanding will begin to open, and know that this is not our doing, and we don't run nothing but our mouths. And sometimes, it's best to keep that closed and listen.

I remember back in the day when I thought that all there was to do was wrong. I didn't know anything about what it was like to do something right. All I knew is that I would do something wrong and call it right, and a lot of times I would hear this little voice telling me that's wrong or that's right. I didn't pay it any mind, or didn't want to at those times. I would just concentrate on the wrongness that was in control, and then too, I thought that I was in control. I guess that's why I didn't listen. You know what the saying is: a hard head will make a soft butt; and if that's the case some people would be walking around with a bell of cotton tied to their butt. But there came a time when you know you'd be put in a position where you don't have any choice but to listen, and even then we close our minds to the things that will help us. Some people would say that there's no God, or Jesus was just a man. I tell you that he's more than a man. And even at that, some people are not ready to face the truth about themselves; about reality, about life, and living; if it's not on their terms. But I am here to let you know that you and I, and whosoever, ain't got no terms; and all we run is our mouths, and sometimes we even do that too much. Let me tell you how I know that there's a God and Jesus was more than a man. I was lying in jail after thinking about how I am going to attempt to get out of about 25 years. Let me start from the beginning as best as I can remember.

It was July 3rd 1995. There was myself, this friend named Charles B., there was another friend named Pee Wee, and then there was this white boy named Ronnie whom everybody thought was the police. And this white boy kept that cheese but didn't nobody know where he worked; but then junkies don't really care as long as they getting high for free. So we had went to this town; got our dope. On the way back we just making plans for the 4th of July. But by the time we got back in town here come the police, and everybody got warrants but somehow this white boy didn't go to jail. There was needles, pipes, and everything. So anyway, we go to jail; the three blacks that used to go from where we stayed to the coast, and back to where we had to score stealing. And when we got to where we were going, we would have a fence, or we knew a fence. So anyway, we go to jail and after about a week or so here comes our first appearance where we *I* would find out our charges. And under the new law, at that time, we were facing big time, especially me. They tried to give me the bitch along with drug charges, and having those needles and pipes. In total I was

facing about 25 or 26 years. So I said, “Damn these police trying to take me off the streets for a while.” So I said, “Man I am already 48 or something like that. I’ll be in a wheelchair by the time I hit the streets again, and I was raised in a somewhat God loving family; and after it’s all said and done you call on the one you know can help you.” So anyway, this friend that I went to school with, he had accepted Christ, and he said that he’s the only one that can help you now. So we talked for a while and finally we got on the same page about Christ. Now mind you it’s been a long time since me and God had a good talk, and I didn’t really know what to say. So I asked my classmate and he said, “Ha! Talk to him just like you are talking to me; from your heart. And when you finish, say these things: I ask in the name of Jesus. And the first thing you need to do is be honest with you, and know that you have been forgiven.” Now getting back I said, “Lord I know that I am guilty, but I don’t think that I am guilty enough for 25 years. What you think about it? Now everybody wants me to plead but I ain’t ready for no plea over 5 years.” So I told my court appointed lawyer to tell the D.A. to put them in the box, and so they started putting ’em in the box. He come the D.A. “Ask him if he will take 10-15”; and I said keep picking. Finally on the 6th juror he said, “See if he will take 40-57 months”; and I said let’s go. I was tired of the game. So I go to processing, and then to a gun camp. Now mind you, I am whole hearted about God now because I’ve seen him work on my behalf. So time goes on. I am studying God’s word; finding people to fellowship with. Anyway, I told God to send me to a church that’s going to teach me the word as well as preach it to me. And I don’t know how long or when it was, but I dreamed this dream about this church that had a blue cross behind the pulpit, and I saw a white robe. It was whiter than anything I’d ever seen. So as time went on I made honor grade and went to Raleigh, N.C. There at this yoke fellow I met this young man named Tony. Look like he must have weighed about a buck 30. So he said, “What level you in?” And I said, “I don’t know.” So he said, “See if you can get in level two, and I’ll take you to church with me.” So I said, “O.k.” So as time went on, came time for me to go on pass. He didn’t come and get me. Now this may sound funny to some people, but the Holy Spirit said put your trust in no man. So I grabbed my Bible; started reading. Next week he came and we went to this church, and the first thing I saw was this blue cross, and I said, “Lord, what are you trying to tell me?” And a few more times after that we went to church, and the pastor came out to preach with this white robe on, and I said, “Lord, I know this is where you want me to be.” And a little while after, I joined that church, and I am still there to this day. God is faithful but we must trust Jesus. Bless you.

What’s going on brothers and sisters? You know, it’s a good thing to

know who's who and what's what in this walk with the one who will set you free from past sins, past and future sicknesses; in other words the one who we are fighting. First of all, let me help you understand that even though we can see what seems to be real, we must understand that I am not fighting you, and you're not fighting against me. We have an adversary whether in or out of the Body of Christ. If we are in the Body of Christ he helps us see, but if we are out we can't see, and will get upset with anyone that wants to help us. See look at 'cha. Even though you're reading this I you're thinking about going to get high 'rat now. You know the Bible that I read tells me that we are born into sin, and that's why I am telling you that we have three enemies. We think that when we are born, just because we have parents to teach, and shows us, and be with us, and comfort us, that everything is alright, and it will be for a while. But we must know that we can't stay in, or at the nest, all the time. We need to leave, and so sometimes this enemy lets us think that because we do the right thang we abide by the laws of the land. Some people think that it's a good thing, and that's why I believe that some of us think that they don't need nothing or nobody. So as long as you go about doing what you think is right, being good to people, not being a bad ass, respecting everybody, you tend to think that it's all good. But then you mess around and slip and you will see with both eyes what the real deal is. I don't care how good you think you are in your community; on your job. You just slip one time and everybody will allow you to see what the real deal is. This world that we live in is a beast. It's like, if you slip just once things will start happening in your life and around you to help you slip again and again, and when this happens you tend to give up on what's real. And then just because we know someone that was in almost the same situation, we begin to put a little trust in them. But let it be known that what he or she has done can't and will not help you in your time of need. Trust me. So the first enemy is the world. This enemy is so cool that there's really no end to what he will or won't do. Have you ever been doing something that you know was right for you, and you were flowing, and all at once something or somebody broke your thought pattern with something crazy, or a silly idea? I know you have. That's this person that some would call the devil. I know some would say that he's not real, but the biggest trick he ever pulled was to convince people that he wasn't real. We must believe that he's real and there is a hell. Now if you don't, one day that's where you 'gone wake up, right in the middle, and then it will be too late. So our second enemy is the devil. Wake up. Ha. You know when you are locked up sometimes you will meet some people that have something on their mind; who are not thinking of making the joint a career move, and then you will meet a lifer, and he will tell

you. He will say, “Young blood, your best thinking got you here.” Don’t you think that it’s about time you allowed someone that we all know to help you with your thinking? You know, I used to hear people say you are your own worst enemy, and I didn’t pay that any mind. But as I began to study the word of God and asked Jesus to come into my life and be my Lord and Savior, until then I didn’t know the real deal. But the word of God says: Do not conform any longer to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. We were born in sin to sin, or to rebel against what is right; against God because we don’t have the ability on our own to do what’s right. So the third enemy we need to contend with is ourselves. We think that we don’t need nobody. We think that if we do and say the right thing, treat people right, don’t drink or curse, and go to church every blue moon, that all will be good. But ha. I am here to let you know that unless you accept Christ as your Lord and Savior, you done seen a bad day. When it comes time to give up the ghost you will see a bad day. When that time comes, and it’s coming, and that’s the real deal, we, say I pray and I know God. But know this: the devil knows God and prays; or puts things in our way so that our eyes won’t be open. Father, I thank you for being who you are. God I know that I must believe and I do. But help me to trust in your son, and give me the strength to believe and accept him as my Lord and Savior. Help me God. Send me someone that will explain to me Jesus’ love for me and help me to understand his will. I need someone Lord. God I want to know your grace. I want your peace. I need your grace. Father help me. Give me the will to do your will; yes to your way. I need you God. Help me. Give me the will to do your will for my life Lord. I accept you as my Lord and Savior. I pray this prayer in Jesus I name. Amen. Thank you Lord.

You know I’ve run into a lot of people that are tired of living a life of drugs; be it pills, shootin’ up, sniffing, or whatever. But sometimes you got to step back and ask yourself: “Do I really want to, or am I just playing?” You must have a made up mind and you must realize that you can’t do this for your friend, your mother, or lover. It has to be your desire that you have and want for your life because what somebody else eat ain’t gone make you shit. You must believe that fact or life will pass you by. If you think that you’re getting straight depending on anybody other than the Creator you must need to realize that there is a chain of command for you, and that this chain will not allow you to go off course spiritually; but things will happen. You must learn to walk all over. Now you may think that when you accept Jesus Christ into your life that it will be all good, and it will. But you must also realize that spiritually it will. Now the Bible says that the gates of hell will not prevail, but it doesn’t say that they

wouldn't open. The thing for you to do is accept people that Christ will put in your life that know him better than you, and be obedient to his word and his will. Now you may say, "How will I know his will?" Read his word. It's time to look up and be afraid once you realize who you're looking for, and know that God's will is his absolute rule and control over all his creation. Peace.

I know that this may seem somewhat dismal to some of you but then it depends on your desire or lack thereof to lose yourself in the proven act of, or the ability to ask the Creator to help you cleanse yourself from self. My brothers and sisters Buddha and them ain't made you. We need to leave that primitive conviction of God's existence behind, and I am not telling or asking of you nothing that hasn't been asked of me. The only thing is I know it will work. I am asking you to read this with the want and desire to rid yourself of what has plummeted so many of our youth, along with various segments of our society. Look, I know that nobody wants to hear this but that' J the way it is, and as I told you before we don't run nothing but our mouths. So we need to ask for help in ridding ourselves of this. Ha. If you want this, it's free for the asking but there must be a willingness to be free from the need of being bound up in body and mind.

Just look at this. I read this story in the Bible that says that this king was so afraid of losing his kingdom that he ordered all male babies two years old to be killed. And if you really think about it, the same thang is going on now at 2 or 3. I heard some people say that's when I knew that 'I was different. I don't know anything about when I was that young. At 12 and older people started putting pressure on you to join their gang. At 20 you're a full pledge gang member that believes that don't nobody love you but your gang. At 22 you got to get your props by taking someone or a whole family's life. At 32 you look back and ask yourself what you did wrong and try to redeem yourself but by that time you think that life and love has passed you by, so you give up on hope. You give up on the life that you know in your heart that was meant to be with your true family. You lose sight of the love that's been feasting on your loved ones hearts and the desire that they have for you. And they pray and God will answer their prayers if they pray in Jesus name. But like so many others your heart has been made hard toward people's emotions and you feel that the whole world is against you, and what you think is real. But the time will come when you'll be all by yourself; where no one can see, and the little boy will come out and you will break down like a double barrel shotgun. And tears will start just running and you won't be able to control them until you've had a talk with the one that you know in your heart, and

mine, that's in control of your every move; and that's as real as it gets. Because you know that no one is immune from death or dying. Peace.

Listen you all. There is this thing called freedom, and it's on the one. Freedom is the ability to choose without getting chosen by fear, by chaos, by passions, or by being codependent on anyone, or anything, that hinders you from being who you want to be. Now there are rules to everything, but we need to follow or enlist rules that will help us achieve what we want to be. Now there are those that the world gives, which is just another form of slavery because it tells you that there is no fear of being caught, no restrictions. But all that will come to an end when the po-po put some stuff in the game and make you know that there is and will be debts to be paid if you cross the line. There was this one time of many that I was in prison and had the, or made the, mistake of thinking that everything was all right just because there was a bunch of homies around. But how many of you know that that ain't nothing in the joint? You need to look out for the man. People that don't like you just because; and yes, even your homeboys in some cases because most of the time it's every man for himself or whatever. Life is funny. You can't do this by yourself. Oh, I know that some of you will say I can or I've done it so far, but the way things are, you were just lucky or someone was looking out; and I would like to think the latter. I used to think the same way. I didn't need nothing or nobody in my business, but you will learn the only business you have is when you go to the bathroom, and even then someone has got to have paid the water bill, or guess what? You know when we have someone we care about and have been hanging around that person or persons for some time we tend to think that it don't mean nothing. But when that person or group has come to rely on you, whether you know it or not, you have entered in agreement with them or covenant. And that's why I believe that confidence in each other, and especially ourselves, has evaded most of us for so long that we don't even give a second thought to the people we promise this or that to. We seem to devalue their friendship ; deny the fact that there's a generosity about them that needs attention. So we go our separate ways not knowing that we have entered a covenant with them. We enter a covenant with friends, with wives, with our co-workers, and the ones we seem to never think about: with our parents and God. Now, normally when you enter a covenant with someone it's a two sided deal, but when you enter a covenant with God he's not expecting anything but your willingness to be transformed by reading his word. And guess what? Everything is on him. He will give you strength to do everything you need to do for him and his glory. Check this out. Our relationship with God is restored once we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Look out now. I want you to step back, and ponder this, and consider what is. Now I've been asked this, I've promised this, and we all know that we be cold lying big time when we tell anyone he or she is going to stop when they get tired. Now check this out. Do you think for a little bit that he or she is 'gone stop doing what makes them feel good? First of all, you are going to fight with yourself and you can just about know who's going to win. Hay, it is amazing how people can be so naive when it comes to their loved ones on drugs. Let me tell you a drug addict is the most conning person you can run into. Check this out. He or she can't be true to themselves. How do you know, or what makes you think that they will be honest with you? The only way that they 'gone be honest with you is that you got that next hit, and even then you gone get beat out of something. Each of us tends to think we see things as they are when we are really looking at things the way we want them to be, and that's real. Time and time again we be giving addicts money hoping that it's the last time when all you're doing is throwing them deeper and deeper into a world of hurt and pain. And all of us have done it at one time or another. And you say that we have been an enabler. They will tell you a boldfaced lie and make you believe it. I know because I've done it. Satan's strategy for your life and mine is deception. He is the master. Satan can't create anything; all he can do is manipulate. I knew this guy from my home town that I was in the joint with. They called him the manipulator, and he was tough. Let me tell you, he manipulated this old lady into taking some nude pictures one time. She would get her monthly check and send just about all of it to him. She was so strung out over him that her sons took out a contract on him from the outside. Now that was the power of deception that he had over her. Some people try to rationalize their way through this life without God, and as this friend once said, "That's not normal" So desire leads to deception and deception leads to disobedience. We were not created to be drunks, drug addicts, pill heads, or whatever the case may be. Look, there's even a counterfeit view of Christianity. Satan is powerful and purposeful. Let's remember now: his job is to steal, kill, and destroy. It doesn't matter as long as the end result is death.

Hay, let me see if I can speak to someone like I was spoken to. As I told you before, I was once where you are at one time. Didn't know anything. Only the feeling that I got when I shot up and looted a few times, and that's if I did keep my eyes on whoever I was with and they were fixin' it up and I didn't get a water shoot. So like I told you before, drugs were my life. I had to have them when I woke up and before I lay down. Sometimes I went to bed, if I went to bed with my so called wake-up, and most of the time I woke up during the night to punch off that so by the time morning carne I ain't had nothing. But

anyway like I said, getting old and tired of that life I just gave it up; plus I was tired of going to j ail. Let me tell you, any form of drugs shouldn't be part of your daily diet, especially if they are not given to you by a doctor. Like this black guy used to say, "Hay you need Jesus." For a little bit allow me to speak about this. At one time I thought that there was nothing better than a shoot of dope 'den one day I was lying in jail, thinking about this Christian life; how God will clean you up. So anyway, after I had read the Bible and I started thinking about this thang I said, "You know what? This Christian life ain't no different from the life that I used to live." The only difference is that we must want to live as a Christian as opposed to living in sin and for sin. But this is the kicker God will give you strength to do this; that's right. He will help you live the way that you were meant to live; free from any negative thoughts or deeds. Hay look, I got a news flash for you. You are not your own; even though you may think so. Ha. You better get a check up from the neck up, and that's real. As I said before, I was thinking that same way once upon a time. It ain't been that long ago either. Ha, it's not a bad life! You just try to do the best you can and when you find yourself at your wits end just call on the name of Jesus and start telling him what the real deal is. You know what I'm saying? Talk to him in your mind. Look, it may sound crazy but it's what's called being in the spirit, and everybody has the ability to do this but they must want to. If you're where you think that people may look at you strange wait until you get home or somewhere you feel comfortable. Look, there's no other place on earth that has been ordained by God himself to carry out Christ's work here on Earth, and that place is the church. God has allowed me to live this long, and I pray that he allows me to live even longer to convey this hope of his word to I everyone that wants to be free.

You know earlier I was telling you about how it was just me and my mom. Well, I knew that there were more people that I didn't know on my father's side but I didn't really meet any of them until years later. You know you always hear about why you don't know any people on your father's side of the family, and I am not saying that they weren't aware that I was alive and where I was. I am just saying that it was a long time before I got to meet and see any of them. Sometime I wonder why it took so long to get to know them but there was this cousin of mine named Cheese. That was a nickname; and he was the only reason I knew anything about anybody else. We were double first cousins. His father was my dad's nephew, and his mom was my mom's niece, and I used to stay with my cousins in the summer. Don't be for that, me and my brothers and sisters would have been off the radar. But there was this one cousin that kept in touch. Her name was Maxine. I remember she used to come and get me and take me

shopping, but after ‘a while she moved on and I was left; that connection was broken as far as the other side of my family for a long time. That’s what happens when one parent makes or decides not to allow one side of the family to get to know the other side. You suffer. And they say it takes a village to rear a child; then and now. No matter how mad we get with each other, a child needs both parents. But now check this out. It would be better if they were in the same house, but I know things happen. But to let him or her know that even if they are not together that they can call and talk. But mothers or fathers don’t trip. It’s about respect for each other and the love for that child. Ha. You had a good time makin’ it. You should make it fun takin’ care of him or her. To know that you can talk to your parent, or parents, would mean a lot. Trust me. I believe that when they start wakin’ up seeing different people go in and out that’s when the respect as far as you being their parent will be there, but only as a person, as a friend; then believe it starts to fade away. The Bible says eyes to see. And they cannot see you just bring Jody or Joann to the crib without the three or four of you building a relationship, and that ain’t what this is about. So ladies get it together. Men we must make it right. You know sometimes you may hear a young lady say, “I don’t need no man”, or a young man say, “I don’t need no woman.” But check this out. A child needs the love of both parents; preferably both married parents. Thank you for listening. Peace.

Hay, look at this. When I was out there strung out like a research monkey, me and this friend, this guy was a friend in every sense of the word; we both were addicts. He used to sell dope. I used to sell dope. Then both of us started using. But a long time before that he was working for this guy, and I really don’t know what happened but they found him outside of town lying in a ditch. He had been shot a number of times and left for dead. I think that I told you this before. I don’t remember. I am sure I have some burnt out cells upstairs. But whether I did or didn’t; anyway, this friend and I hooked up after some time. And there was this big tree at the edge of the hood in the backyard of this liquor house where everybody would meet that was selling, stealing, shooting; anything that had to do with drugs. People would come that wanted to buy stolen goods. Anyway, that’s where we would hang out each morning before everybody went their own ways to hustle or whatever. And a lot of times the younger hustlers would meet him and me under that tree, and most of the time we would be sick. Dope sick. And some of the younger guys would get together and give us money to go and cop or buy dope so they could see us scratch and nod in and out. Man it was crazy. And this happened for a long time until most of them got busted or whatever. They would say it looked bad for the O.G.’s, so they would get us

straight.

I remember when I would hear church folk singing: “It’s me! It’s me, oh Lord! Standing in the need of prayer.” Now, as you hear the news nationally or locally, and even world news, you hear and see people are just talking about killing. There be father against son, mother against daughter, friend against friend; and if that’s not enough you got nations wantin’ to wipe out nations, and there seems to be no end to this madness. But in some or all cases this is to be expected. I often think about the times I was out there shootin’ up, and that’s all I was thinking about. At that time I wanted nothing but my dope. I wasn’t a greedy junkie. I was just a junkie that loved to shoot dope all the time and didn’t really care how I got to my goal as long as the end result was high. But getting back to the situation. There’s so much killing going on. It’s bad enough that you be trying to kill you with drugs, here come some clown and say, “God told me to do this.” Negro my God is about love. Now the other God . . . now that’s something else altogether. You can kinda see where they be coming from but those are the ones that done took the sheets off and now wearing suits and all that phony mess. Well all I can say is, “Ha! You need Jesus in a big way.” Look I thought I would never say anything like that and it just goes to show you that Jim Crow ain’t dead. He’s just flying a little higher, that’s all. Now anybody can change but they got to want to look. Any kind of change that you need to make begins with you, but you need some help and I am not talking about from man. You know what I am saying? It’s too short for you to think it’s gone happen because of your mom or dad. They got their if they go it and you got to get yours. Are you listening too? And it won’t happen because you are a creation of God. Understand, I don’t care who you know or how good you are; who you are to people or how much you give. Look, that won’t help you get where you need to be ’cause everybody know God, or about who or what they perceive to be God; but we must know his son as Savior, and that’s real. Not only that, we must develop a relationship with him. Look, because of the victory you wantin’ in your life for you there have to be battles fought and won by you with God’s help through his son Jesus. Now you won’t be able to see him but he will be right there beside you, but you must believe in God and trust Jesus and it will happen. Look, he did it for me and I know he’ll do it for you. One thing: you can’t look to your old friends or keep running with them because they want you to stay in turmoil with them. Trust me, the only help they will give is if you all get together and they come up with most of the dope after they have given you a water shot if you’re not watching him or her. You would be expecting that from a dude but from a girl? Come on now. Look, you need a spiritual sledge-hammer to tear down walls of discomfort

and the partitions of mayhem that have erected themselves in our Godly lives. I say Godly because we as a people, and especially black people, were raised knowing God. Now whatever happened between then and now is another story, and that ain't no joke. Look, check this out. I want to help you pray. Say:

Father, I thank you, I praise you, and we give you honor and glory Lord. I know that these drugs are wrong for me and are destroying my mind, body, and soul. But Lord I've been doing this for a while and I am tired of not being myself. I want to learn to love you, myself, and my family. Help me father because I know they love me. Father, I guess what I am asking for is strength to say no to a lot of things that would hinder me from your love, my family's love, and the respect from my friends. Lord, I don't know how to begin to love you so I need your help. I need the power that only the Spirit gives. I need the wisdom, I need your power. I want for you to help me know that you are God, and your son as my Savior in Jesus name. Amen.

Look up now. Ha, with this ring I thee wed! That's what I would think Jesus would have, and will, say to you. A man is supposed to protect his bride no matter what, and I believe this is what happens when you accept Christ. Now, I am not saying that you don't have any other gods in your life but what I am saying is that they will not protect you like my God. I think that the reason we use drugs and do a lot of other crazy things is that we want attention. We want to be it; whatever it is. And life is moving so fast that we think that we need to do something to keep up, but that's not the case. It took me a few minutes to find this out. There are a few reasons we tend to look the other way. One is that we want attention, but the attention we get is from the wrong people with the wrong ideas of how it's supposed to be. Then we think that it's kool, but cool ain't spelled with a 'k'. Then we think that it makes us look good not knowing that the life we have ventured into is taking us out backwards when we should be moving forwards. Then there's respect for ourselves, for others, and whoever else might care about you. Then it makes you think that the world owes you, and sooner or later you start thinking that everybody owes you something; and that's when drugs have really emerged in your life to be the embodiment of who you see yourself to be when in reality you are the sum total of nothing. You become elusive to everyone around you, and you become unwilling to embrace life as it really is. Ha. Don't think for one second that I haven't lived it firsthand. Look, only when you start caring and stop craving for these powers, pills, whiskey, or whatever floats your boat, will things start to get better. Now check this out. I am not saying that there won't be some hard times when you don't get high that your world will stop. But listen:

my God knows the thoughts and intents of your heart. And if you really want to stop pimpin' yourself and others and start trying to live the way that life l as intended through my Lord, then you just need to make up what little mind that drugs haven't taken. Peace.

The Beginning
A New
Life
THE END

THE BEGINNING...
THE END...
ANEW!

Zedart Hodges

Table of Contents

Cover Page
The Beginning . . . The End . . . Anew!
Copyright Page
Table of Contents